




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

Record of Proceedings, 15 February 2017

MOTION

Military Training Areas

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (5.21 pm): I support the motion moved by the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries. That motion states—

That this House condemns the federal and state Liberal National Party members of parliament for abandoning graziers, meatworkers and small businesses of the Rockhampton and Charters Towers regions in their fight against the Turnbull government's planned compulsory acquisition of prime Queensland grazing land.

I was one of those proud people who was fighting very strongly against this decision because I thought it was one of the lowest acts I had ever seen. One of the biggest issues we had faced in the Charters Towers region was the uranium mine spill with Ben Lomond back in the eighties, where the people of Charters Towers rose up and said that this mine needed to be stopped. All that we heard as a result of that uranium mine spill and the Ben Lomond uranium mine was 'jobs, jobs, jobs', but the only thing we got out of that uranium mine was contamination. It was exactly the same when we saw Senator Macdonald come up to the Charters Towers region and tell the graziers, 'This is so important. You must accept this because this is about jobs, jobs, jobs,' but the Singapore army does not send their children to the Charters Towers state schools, private schools and primary schools, they do not go in there and buy a lawn mower and they do not go in there and spend money on hay or molasses. They do not contribute to that community.

It is very important to acknowledge that this proposal was backed by the federal government. This proposal to force 22 graziers out of the Charters Towers region—and I believe another 50 or more down at Shoalwater Bay—was completely un-Australian and it goes against the Australian way of life. It was not just the graziers who were taking a stand against this. The whole Charters Towers Regional Council community and people right across Queensland, if not Australia, felt this was a very unjust, low act. I am very pleased that I was one of those who was able to stand up and fight and take on the federal government, working with the graziers and the local communities, because we could see that this was unjust. This was not only unjust; this would impact on our region because there are three major river systems that run through that area where they were going to acquire that land. One was the Burdekin, which is prime grazing land and agricultural land, another was the Fanning and the other was the Star River and Keelbottom Creek. They all run into the Burdekin. That was all going to be lost and wiped out as a result of this government's position.

The federal government did not think this was a great move because they wanted to work with an overseas defence organisation and because it was all about protection; this was about getting the votes going into the federal election. They thought it sounded good because this agreement was going to create thousands of jobs for our community—'Vote for us and you'll get jobs and ensure that these shopfronts that have closed will reopen.' The only thing we got out of this was heartache and frustration.

I am very proud to be able to stand up for those landowners. John Brownson said the other day that now he can plan, he can buy stockfeed, he can buy cattle, he can get loans and he has a vision in front of him. It is the same for Blair Knuth and all of those landowners in that area.

We want to ensure that there is legislation so this does not happen again. We need to protect these landowners and these families. I am very proud and greatly honoured to be able to stand up for our community, our kids and our grazing industry and ensure that cattle goes through our saleyards and our meatworks. We can now plan for the Hell's Gate Dam and the Big Rocks program. We now have something, because all we heard about was acquisition of land. We can now start planning.